

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY URGES FEDS TO COMPENSATE SWAIN COUNTY FOR UNFINISHED ROAD

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley called Friday for the federal government to resolve a longstanding controversy by pursuing a financial settlement with the citizens of Swain County, instead of building a 37-mile road through the Great Smoky National Park.

In a letter sent Friday to Interior Department Secretary Gale Norton, Gov. Easley wrote: “By pursuing a fair financial settlement, the federal government can fulfill a longstanding obligation to the people of Swain County while at the same time protecting the outstanding natural heritage features of the nation’s most visited national park.”

The federal government’s obligation to Swain County dates back to a 1943 Memorandum of Agreement that deals with the flooding of portions of N.C. State Road 288, which was caused by the Tennessee Valley Authority’s construction of the Fontana Dam on the Little Tennessee River. To compensate the county for this loss, the Department of Interior agreed to construct an alternative Park Road (now known as the North Shore Road) along the north shore of the new Fontana Reservoir. Yet, this road has never been built.

In his letter, Gov. Easley supports the Park Service decision to halt construction of North Shore Road for environmental reasons but emphasizes that some form of compensation for Swain County is long overdue.

The National Park Service is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement on resuming construction of the North Shore Road that will weigh the completion of the road against other “no build” options, including a cash settlement with Swain County.

A copy of the letter is attached.

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